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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
THURSDAY DECEMBER 16, 2010
www.justice.gov/usao.iln

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**U.S. SEIZES NEARLY 11 TONS OF MARIJUANA ABOARD TRAIN FROM MEXICO;
SEVEN DEFENDANTS ARRESTED AT CHICAGO HEIGHTS STORAGE SITE**

Homeland Security/DEA investigation yields largest marijuana seizure ever in Chicago area

CHICAGO — Federal marijuana distribution conspiracy charges were filed today against seven defendants who were arrested yesterday during what law enforcement officials said they believe is the largest seizure ever of marijuana in the Chicago area — conservatively estimated at approximately 21,800 pounds, or nearly 11 tons, packed into six railroad cars from Mexico that arrived at a warehouse in south suburban Chicago Heights earlier this month. The marijuana is estimated to have a value of approximately \$22 million.

The arrests and seizure followed an intensive month-long investigation and were announced today by Patrick J. Fitzgerald, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois; Gary J. Hartwig, Special Agent-in-Charge of ICE Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) in Chicago; Jack Riley, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago Field Division of the Drug Enforcement Administration; David Murphy, Director of Field Operations for U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) in Chicago; and John Beutlich, Director of Operations for CBP Air and Marine, Northern Region. The Illinois State Police, the Will County Cooperative Police Assistance Team Task Force (WCPAT), and the Union Pacific Railroad Police Department also participated in the investigation,

which was conducted under the umbrella of the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF).

The defendants are: **Carlos Osvaldo Quintero**, also known as “Carlos Gomez” and “Miguel Dominguez,” 31; his father, **Martin Quintero**, 63; **Felipe de Jesus Magana-Campos**, aka “Padrino,” 47; **Eduardo Angel Zalayaran-Ruiz**, aka “Other Inge,” 54; **Javier Vera**, aka “Ducky,” 24; **Christian Gonzalez**, aka “Chris,” 24; and **Miguel Cordova**, aka “Mike,” 20. All seven were charged with conspiracy to possess and distribute marijuana in a criminal complaint filed today in U.S. District Court. They appeared this morning before U.S. Magistrate Judge Arlander Keys and remain in federal custody pending detention and preliminary hearings, which were scheduled for 2:30 p.m. next Tuesday.

“This historic drug seizure represents law enforcement partnership and cooperation at their best,” said Mr. Hartwig. “HSI and DEA agents, together with our state and local partners, removed nearly 11 tons of marijuana intended for our communities. ICE will continue identifying and dismantling criminal organizations that smuggle drugs across our borders and into our communities.”

Mr. Riley, of the DEA, said: “The estimated \$22 million dollars worth of marijuana seized in this joint investigation translates to a significant blow to the availability of marijuana in the region, as well as a denial of illicit proceeds back to those responsible for this shipment.”

According to a 74-page affidavit by an HSI special agent, on Nov. 17, CBP officers in Eagle Pass, Tex., discovered that a Union Pacific train bound for Chicago Heights was carrying approximately 21,800 pounds of suspected marijuana. CBP officers observed a number of large bundled packages, referred to as “super sacks,” in six cars on the train. A CBP canine alerted officers to the presence of narcotics in the train cars near several of the super sacks. CBP officers then

opened a super sack and observed 13 cubic bundles, which were encrusted in a thick layer of fine red masonry pigment dust. CBP officers broke open several of these cubic bundles and observed a green leafy substance, which field tested positive for the presence of marijuana. In total, CBP officers observed that approximately 109 super sacks in the train cars contained cubic bundles comprised of a green leafy substance. Officers weighed 13 of the cubic bundles from one super sack and determined that they weighed approximately 200 pounds.

The bill of lading associated with these cars stated that they contained 58 super sacks in each train car, or a total of approximately 340 super sacks. The shipping documents stated that the super sacks contained packages listed as "TITANIUM PIGMENTS OR." The documents further stated that the train cars were loaded and sent by a company called Comercializadora De Minerale, located in Jalisco, Mexico, and were being imported by a company called Earth Minerals Corp., in Rockdale, just south of Joliet.

CBP officers contacted HSI special agents for further investigation. The HSI agents then placed the suspected marijuana back into the rail cars and sealed them. The rail cars were then placed back into the normal course of commerce, and with the railroad's cooperation, HSI and DEA agents surveilled the train cars as they traveled to a storage warehouse in the 1200 block of S. State Road, in Chicago Heights, with rail access.

One defendant, identified as **Carlos Osvaldo Quintero**, allegedly spoke to a Union Pacific employee on multiple occasions to coordinate the delivery of the train cars to the warehouse. From Dec. 6 through 10, the rail cars were unloaded by individuals who used forklifts to move large bundled packages containing marijuana from inside the cars to a storage facility located approximately 50 yards from the initial warehouse.

On several occasions on Nov. 17 and 18, CBP officers spoke with a customs broker who works in Eagle Pass, Tex. The broker stated that he had been hired by Earth Minerals, and that a man identifying himself as “Miguel Dominguez” had called him multiple times on Nov. 17 to inquire about the whereabouts and estimated arrival date for the rail cars. Further investigation yielded no public records of any businesses named Chicago Earth Minerals Corp. or Earth Minerals Corp. in Illinois.

On Dec. 1, agents arranged for the delivery of a test train car, believed to be carrying no marijuana, to the Chicago Heights warehouse premises. The gate to the premises was locked and the test rail car was parked outside overnight. The next morning, agents observed an individual identified as “Carlos Gomez” and three unidentified men arrive at the premises. Gomez and the others were observed pushing the test car inside of the warehouse premises, using a mechanical device. Later that day, agents observed Gomez and the others use a forklift to move cargo from the test car onto pallets. Using aerial surveillance, agents further observed the pallets being loaded onto a semi-tractor trailer, with a flatbed.

On Dec. 6, agents caused the six interdicted rail cars to be delivered to train tracks adjoining the Chicago heights warehouse. Agents observed several individuals arrive at the site and watched as the individuals moved one of the rail cars inside of the warehouse premises, using a mechanical device. Throughout last week, HSI and DEA agents, using court-authorized video recording inside the facility and aerial surveillance, observed individuals unloading the large super sacks from the rail cars, and specifically observed the following pattern of activity:

- ▶ approximately four individuals used forklifts to unload super sacks from one of the rail cars that was parked inside of the site;

- ▶ the individuals loaded the majority of the super sacks from the rail cars onto a flatbed semi-truck. Once the flatbed was filled with super sacks, the truck was driven approximately 50 yards to an a smaller storage facility located just to the west; and
- ▶ the individuals then used a forklift to unload the super sacks from the flatbed, and moved them inside of the warehouse where they were stored until yesterday. Between Dec. 7-10, the process was repeated of unloading the super sacks from the six rail cars and moving them to the warehouse.

Agents maintained constant surveillance and did not observe any marijuana being removed from the storage facility. Between Dec. 6 and 15, agents used court-authorized wiretaps to intercept numerous telephone conversations in which Carlos Osvaldo Quintero and others allegedly discussed unloading, transporting and distributing the marijuana.

The marijuana distribution conspiracy carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years in prison and a maximum of life imprisonment and a \$4 million fine. If convicted, the Court must determine a reasonable sentence to impose under the advisory United States Sentencing Guidelines.

The government is being represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Steven Grimes, Nicole Kim and Erika Csicsila.

A complaint contains only charges and is not evidence of guilt. The defendants are presumed innocent and are entitled to a fair trial at which the government has the burden of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

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